



MARK MY WORDS

Mark Griffiths is the professor of gambling studies at Nottingham Trent University and, according to a squib in the *British Medical Journal*, he believes that computer games are good for the health. For example, he reckons that regular bouts of console bashing can distract the player from pain, and that video games are also useful for strengthening a player's hands.

Zygote is not a professor of gambling studies at any university, but he has amassed a significant amount of irrefutable data over the past quarter of a century that links the playing of computer games to several aspects of health and well-being. These include seizures, auditory hallucinations, repetitive strain injury, low-level radiation, eye damage and, worst of all, spending other people's money on crap.

Zygote eagerly awaits the next edition of the *British Medical Journal*, in which a professor of social conditioning will explain how violent computer games prevent terrorism.

SICK CURE

There are a number of commercial services offering secure online password storage and retrieval for a modest fee. Of course this is a complete load of old cobblers, because storing sensitive data online is just about the least secure method ever dreamed up, and it is open to any number of accidental risks and deliberate abuses.

Mind you, it's not quite as daft as keeping your personal data in a file on your hard disk. What's that? You keep your personal data in a file on your hard disk? In which case, take a leaf out of Zygote's book. He has to remember dozens of passwords, user IDs, access sequences, personal identification numbers, file transfer protocols and all the other codes

ZYGOTE

Zygote has stumbled upon some great ideas this month, including a Mormon threat to Microsoft and the most ludicrous gadget ever made – but should he tell everyone where he stores all his passwords?

needed to survive and prosper in the modern world, and he has never had a problem recalling any of them. This is because he has adopted a foolproof system of information storage and retrieval, which costs far less than online services, runs no risk of system failure and can be updated at any time using a standard-format Biro. He writes all his passwords down on a sheet of paper and keeps it in his *Oxford English Dictionary* on the page containing the entry 'secret codes'.

There's always the risk of burglars stealing Zygote's computer, but there is absolutely no chance of them looking something up in the *Oxford English* while they're doing it.

LADY LUCK

Online demographics in the UK have moved at an astonishing rate over the past decade. In 1994, only one in 10 internet users was female, but now women outnumber men online by a significant factor. Today, the UK has the highest proportion of consumers in the world who use the web to book their holidays abroad, including travel, accommodation and insurance.

When it comes to the average age of UK citizens using the web on

a regular basis, this is now in the 45 to 65 age group, and it is getting older all the time. More of our households have embraced broadband than are on dial-up, which means that we are also enjoying a richer experience than ever before.

And what about the sort of things the modern UK surfer looks at? The latest analysis of browser usage in the public domain shows that in the past 12 months, over half of UK subscribers have accessed a pornographic website, almost two-thirds of us have gone to a gambling website and an even greater number have visited eBay.

So there we have it, the encapsulation of the typical internet user in modern Britain: a middle-aged woman in a hurry to spend her casino winnings on going abroad in search of bargain sex. Speaking of which...

UP AND RUNNING

Last month Zygote recommended the H2O underwater iPod for a genuine Brian Jones leisure experience. But several readers have asked if there is an alternative for people who are afraid to plunge in at the deep end and prefer to remain comfortably moist instead. Indeed there is, it costs

a mere \$70 (around £39), and it is manufactured by the splendidly named Grand Opening Corporation. The Audi-Oh plugs into your iPod, is the size and shape of a mallard's egg and comes with handy elasticated straps for the wearer to attach to suitable body parts. Once it is up and running, the user can enjoy good vibrations as the built-in computer turns it into a smart sex aid. The automatic sensors are guaranteed to pick up on the audio waves and throb your meat to the beat. This saves setting your smartphone to vibrate, thus missing that all-important call while otherwise engaged.

Speaking of tossers, Zygote was very pleased when Microsoft killed off the name Longhorn for its new operating system, because it would have been very confusing among all those emails offering cures for impotence and premature ejaculation. But the choice of Vista as its new brand name could be equally confusing. The Microsoft corporate video seems to imply that once we all have Vista installed and working, we will be able to walk on slippery floors across very sunny rooms without falling over. This is a skill Zygote has been trying to master for years, and he greatly looks forward to Microsoft putting an end to sore coccyx misery, after years of XP discomfort.

The video also promises users that Vista will make them clear, confident and connected, which is identical to the sort of rewards the Church of Scientology promises. When Zygote tried to express his delight and register the domain name vistasucks.com, he was astonished to discover that he had been beaten to it by a well-known organisation based in Salt Lake City, in the lovely state of Utah. For the first time ever, Zygote would like to offer the Mormons his very best wishes. Bless you. ☹

Great Moments in Computing
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213: WEBSITE OPTIMISATION



IF YOU WANT TO ATTRACT THE RIGHT SORT OF VISITOR TO YOUR WEBSITE, YOU MUST FIRST CHECK BROWSER COMPATIBILITY



THEN YOU NEED TO MAKE SURE YOUR DISPLAY IS OPERATING AT THE OPTIMUM RESOLUTION



BUT THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD OF CAPTURING SIGNIFICANT WEB TRAFFIC IS FOR WEBMASTERS TO SET UP MUTUAL LINKS.